

Cunliffe E.

**Heritage Destruction: lessons from the Middle East and North Africa region  
for post-conflict countries.**

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# CATASTROPHE AND CHALLENGE

## CULTURAL HERITAGE IN POST-CONFLICT RECOVERY

DECEMBER 5–7, 2016, BTU COTTBUS

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# METHODS AND TOOLS

Emma Cunliffe

# Heritage Destruction

## Lessons from the Middle East and North Africa for Post-Conflict Countries

### Abstract

Based on the work of the Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa Project (EAMENA), this paper presents a number of observations that can be applied to some of the issues faced in post-conflict reconstruction, such as the extensive levels of damage and lack of resources (both financial and in terms of staff capacity). The paper begins by introducing EAMENA, before discussing the hallmarks of post-conflict countries that can be seen in other areas which are not in conflict, using case studies from Libya and Egypt. Within this framework, it then presents the EAMENA approach for documentation and working towards the protection of archaeological sites in countries that are experiencing unrest and where the security situation is complicated, to highlight observations that can be applied to post-conflict countries. In particular the paper recommends: the early collection of baseline cultural heritage data; the use of satellite imagery for documentation and interpretation, and assisting in prioritisation; a more comprehensive understanding of the types of damage likely to occur, together with broader post-conflict heritage management plans; the necessity of conducting work during conflict if possible; and reconstruction programmes targeting not only built cultural heritage, but the wider cultural heritage sector, including the local community.

#### Keywords:

Heritage destruction, archaeology, post-conflict, conflict, EAMENA.

The intentional destruction of cultural heritage during ongoing conflicts has once again risen to international attention. The widespread utilisation of social media and access to satellite imagery has vastly increased both the information about the extent of the destruction, and the speed with which information becomes available during conflicts. Concurrent with the increase in information about the extent of destruction (and the number of areas in need of reconstruction) is the increasing awareness amongst heritage professionals of the need to prioritise the increasingly limited resources available, and to incorporate the variety of local,

national and international valuations of heritage. Given the improved access to information, it is now possible to begin to assess 'need' and even to plan reconstruction earlier than ever before. The amount of available information can be overwhelming, and therefore there are risks that this will be poorly utilised. In addition, the focus of post-conflict reconstruction has remained firmly on specific types of conflict-oriented damage, and methods of dealing with it. Lastly, such work is largely conducted after the conflict is over, with ethical debates continuing even now about the legitimacy of operating during a conflict. For example, in



a recent letter published online 'Absolute despair with UNESCO: An Open Letter'<sup>1</sup>, the writers express concern about UNESCO's proposed reconstruction work at Palmyra given the ongoing conflict:

*"The only operations that we can consider in the present context are an inventory and emergency intervention, certainly not restoration. How can we speak of restoration of cultural property when the conflict is still ravaging the country?"*

Based on the work of the Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa Project (EAMENA), this paper presents a number of observations that can be applied to these issues. The paper begins by introducing the EAMENA Project, before discussing the hallmarks of post-conflict countries that can be seen in other areas which are not in conflict, using case studies from Libya and Egypt. Within this framework, it then presents the EAMENA approach for documentation and working towards the protection of archaeological sites in countries that are experiencing unrest and where the security situation is complicated, to highlight observations that can be applied to post-conflict countries.

### Introducing EAMENA

The EAMENA project is based in the University of Oxford, in partnership with the Universities of Leicester and Durham, funded by the Arcadia Fund until 2020 (Bewley et al. 2015). The project operates across the entire MENA region, in both countries that are not in conflict, and in those that are.

The project aims to:<sup>2</sup>

- Identify, document and monitor the endangered archaeology of the MENA region.
- Create a record of sites and monuments for each country in MENA.
- Train and empower heritage professionals in the region.
- Make information freely accessible.
- Help to protect and conserve the MENA region's archaeological heritage.
- Raise awareness and encourage informed debate.
- Create networks and share knowledge, within MENA and beyond.
- Assist customs and law enforcement agencies tackling looting and the illegal trade in antiquities.

The scale of EAMENA's work across the region has enabled observations of cultural property destruction and heritage management in countries with complicated security situations that are similar to post-conflict countries. Given this, EAMENA's ap-

proach in these countries may provide suggestions for approaches in post-conflict countries.

### Conflict and Post-Conflict Countries

Firstly, in order to understand what is understood by 'post-conflict', it is necessary to consider the term 'conflict'. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) defines 'armed conflict' as the point at which customary international law comes into play, and has proposed the following definitions (ICRC 2008), which reflect strong prevailing legal opinion:

1. **"International armed conflicts** exist whenever there is resort to armed force between two or more States.
2. **Non-international armed conflicts** are protracted armed confrontations occurring between governmental armed forces and the forces of one or more armed groups, or between such groups arising on the territory of a State [party to the Geneva Conventions]. The armed confrontation must reach a *minimum level of intensity* and the parties involved in the conflict must show a *minimum of organisation*."

Under that definition, the post-conflict period is the point at which the level of violence is no longer sufficiently high (i.e. it is sporadic) or the people resorting to violence are not organized as armed groups. 'Post-conflict', therefore, is not the same as peace. Violence can – and does – continue to recur, often for many years.

An examination of both post-conflict countries and countries with complicated security situations has suggested there may be several trends which both share:

- There will still be civil tension that can break out into violence, which will affect heritage work and reconstruction – for example, the Ferhadija mosque in Banja Luka Mosque, Bosnia, indicates how long it can impact such work. Destroyed on 7 May 1993, it was finally reopened in 2016 – 23 years to the day after it was blown up as part of a campaign of ethnic cleansing (Borger 2016), after many social and political complications. In fact, the proposed reconstruction of the mosque perpetuated the violence, sparking planned riots (Walasek 2015), despite occurring in the 'post-conflict' period.
- The violence of the conflict may still occur sporadically, threatening both the wider population, and heritage sites and heritage workers.
- Together, the civil tension and sporadic violence contribute to a wider lack of security, hindering both reconstruction and the daily management of sites (as seen in Devlin 1983), potentially resulting in enforced neglect.

- The problems with ongoing violence, and the social and political difficulties in site management and reconstruction, will also be exacerbated by economic hardship, both at the national level, where there will be little money for cultural projects or the recruitment and training of staff, or the local level, when people may turn to looting to provide income (as seen in Iraq in the 1990s, and post-2003, for example in Stone & Farchakh-Bajjal 2008).
- All sectors will have experienced damage – sites and their supporting infrastructure will be competing alongside other civil projects (as seen in Beirut, later in this article).
- Everyone will have a different idea of what matters most, and what should be done first (or at all).

These characteristics can be seen in countries that are not in a state of 'conflict', or 'post-conflict': here two case studies are used to highlight some observations. The first case study is Libya, a country that is clearly in conflict, but where much of the damage to cultural property is not occurring as a result of fighting, but is occurring elsewhere as a result of the security situation. The second country is Egypt, which is also experiencing damage to cultural property as a result of a complicated security situation, but which is not in conflict. However, the situations in both countries share similarities with post-conflict countries.

### Libya: A Case Study

After the fighting in 2011, Libya entered a period of unrest, if not peace. Armed conflict broke out again in May 2014 when the 'Libyan National Army' launched a military assault against militant groups, which rapidly deteriorated into widespread fighting. Given this, at its 2016 World Heritage Committee meeting, UNESCO placed all five Libyan World Heritage Sites on the World Heritage in Danger list (UNESCO Press 2016).

*The Committee noted the high level of instability affecting the country and the fact that armed groups are present on these sites or in their immediate surroundings."*

However, whilst large parts of Libya are experiencing fighting, and presumably many buildings are suffering the types of damage traditionally associated with combat (e.g. shrapnel scarring, ballistic damage, etc.) (Elhawat 2016), the fighting is localised, and focussed in certain areas. In many areas of Libya the damage that is occurring to the cultural property has very little to do with the conflict. Instead it arises when the security situation and economic difficulties prevent the laws from being enforced, and prevent heritage staff from accessing sites. It is this lack of security, rather than

direct combat, which both hinders, and helps, site protection. In fact, according to an interview conducted by The Spectator newspaper at the World Heritage site of Leptis Magna (Sengupta 2015), in some cases the armed groups intend to protect the site:

*"As the gunmen approached, they looked less threatening and began to speak. They were, they explained, not ISIS but a group of local volunteers protecting the site from the Islamist terrorists: Neighbourhood Watch, with Kalashnikovs."*

Damage occurs as a result of the enforced neglect of sites that may need maintenance, and from increasing illegal development and illegal agriculture. In such cases, the ubiquitous bulldozer can cause more damage more quickly than any military campaign, even on supposedly protected sites. The large World Heritage Site of Cyrene, for example, would need a large number of guards to manage the entire site. Although it has not been involved in direct fighting, satellite imagery analysis by the EAMENA team reveals steady increases in development in the archaeological areas of the site, such as a large number of buildings (figure 1) and increasing agriculture. Photos obtained by Dr Hafed Walda (Kings College London) also demonstrate that an illegal road has been built through the necropolis. Heritage staff have been unable to prevent the illegal development. EAMENA's Dr Louise Rayne has analysed CORONA satellite imagery and aerial photographs from the 1950s, mapping the impact of expanding agriculture in the protected Jufra area. It continued to threaten the archaeology of the area after 2011 – the unrest has not halted it.

This destruction is – in many ways – worse than that seen during conflict. Ballistic damage, for example, only affects buildings above ground level, and it leaves rubble that can be often be used in reconstruction, but the bulldozing required for development also removes sub-surface remains. The flattening of ground and removal of stone in order to expand agriculture has a similarly destructive effect. Analysis of numerous sequential satellite images by the EAMENA staff suggests that damage of this type was widespread before conflict and continues to expand during conflict when the difficult security situation allows opportunities for such illegal expansion. Although this damage is more usually associated with peacetime, it can be devastating during conflict, and yet is rarely considered in post-conflict programmes.

As a result of the inability of guards and heritage staff to access and protect sites, and perhaps exacerbated by the economic issues, looting has also increased during the conflict. A flurry of reports in 2016 suggested that illegally excavated





Fig. 1a: Development at a part of the World Heritage Site Cyrene, Libya (DigitalGlobe image, dated 29 March 2009 on Google Earth).

artefacts are "gushing out" of Libya (Cornwell 2016). Whilst that may be a journalistic exaggeration, it was estimated by one Iraqi expert<sup>3</sup> that up to 60% of the sites in southern Iraq were looted in the post-conflict coalition occupation period after 2003. The severity of the problem in Iraq – and the devastation caused – was borne out by number of satellite imagery studies (Stone 2008; Stone 2015; van Ess et al. 2006). Although similar studies have yet to be carried out in Libya to determine the scale, the problem was serious enough by 2013 to necessitate an emergency UNESCO workshop in Tripoli (Brodie 2015).

Areas of Libya which are not in conflict also demonstrate heritage destruction from increased sectarian tensions. The EAMENA team have collated hundreds of reports (verified and unverified) of shrine/marabout destruction between 2011 and 2016,<sup>4</sup> ranging from major shrines in cities, to small local shrines. Whilst conducting other satellite imagery analysis, Dr Martin Sterry noted evidence that shows this phenomenon is more widespread, but the true number of incidents is unknown (Sterry, pers. comm. 2016). Although such destruction is traditionally associated with fundamental extremism in conflict zones (and as such, considered for reconstruction), the local

nature of many of these incidents may force us to reconsider our assumptions about the nature of such events. In these situations, community participation in reconstruction agendas will be paramount, to determine the extent to which such incidents reflect local agendas, or just a small, unwelcome, minority. They also hint towards civil tensions that may make reconstruction difficult, and which may break out into violence: for example in one shrine destruction case

*"A large number of armed militias carrying medium and heavy weapons arrived at the al-Sha'ab mosque with the intention to destroy the mosque because of their belief graves are anti-Islamic," a government official said. He told Reuters that authorities tried to stop them but, after a small clash, decided to seal off the area while the demolition took place to prevent any violence spreading." (Al-Jazeera 2012)*

In the cases highlighted, it is not the conflict that directly causes the damage. Political/religious tensions (expressed at both the local and the national level) are expressed in heritage destruction; staff cannot access sites due to the security situation, leading to looting and illegal development (poten-





Fig. 1b: Development at a part of the World Heritage Site Cyrene, Libya (DigitalGlobe image dated 31 March 2016 on Google Earth).

tially exacerbated by economic hardship); and there is the lack of adequate site guards (particularly on very large sites). These problems are also exacerbated by the lack of money for the recruitment, training and resourcing of the heritage sector (highlighted by the UNESCO emergency workshops, and by the fact two of the UK's 2016 Cultural Protection Fund projects were to train Libyan staff).

#### Lessons for post-conflict: Egypt

The heritage destruction demonstrated in Libya may have occurred while the country was in conflict, but the conflict was not solely responsible for it. Similarly, Egypt is not classed as a country in conflict, but the complicated security situation bears many of the same characteristics of Libya, and of a post-conflict situation. To date, preliminary reports of 75 (verified and unverified) incidents of heritage destruction with a religious (or partly religious) motivation occurring between 2011 and 2013 have been collected by the EAMENA Project. Again, many of these are attributed to local people, rather than extremist groups, highlighting the civil tension that is also often seen in post-conflict countries. These incidents of destruction are sometimes accompanied by outbreaks of violence, acting as a stark reminder that violence and

heritage destruction do not only occur during conflict. For example, the day after President Morsi was ousted, there were reports of as many as 52 attacks on Coptic Churches as a form of reprisal (Sirgany & Smith-Spark 2013), in addition to houses and businesses, of which Human Rights Watch were able to verify 42 (2013). Such attacks continue still: the most recent attack in December 2016 was considered "one of the deadliest attacks carried out against a religious minority in recent memory", killing at least 25 people and wounding 49 others (Wise 2016). In addition, the economic hardship facing many Egyptians, coupled with a lack of local investment in their heritage, has led to a marked rise in looting of sites (Teijgeler 2013; Parcak 2015), as seen in post-conflict Iraq. Cemetery sites like El-Hibeh, for example, have been decimated (Redmount 2014) (figure 2), a phenomenon recorded throughout the country (Paul 2016). In fact, the lack of security has become so problematic that Mohammed Younes, head of antiquities for Dahshour, noted:

*"looting has become more brazen in many places. Just a few weeks ago, several guards at Dahshour were shot and wounded when they confronted thieves doing an illegal dig during the night."* (Nasser & AP 2013)

Inadequate resourcing of heritage staff, partly due to financial constraints, can result in unchecked development that also causes significant damage to sites, even major protected sites. A satellite imagery comparison using sequential DigitalGlobe imagery on Google Earth from May 2003 to May 2016 demonstrates the encroachment of quarrying/mineral extraction in the north of the Saqqara pyramid fields (part of the World Heritage site) (figures 3). Media reports also indicate the World Heritage site is experiencing illegal development and use as an illegal cemetery around Dashour, threatening the Giza pyramids. According to Associated Press interview with Younes:

*"The cemetery expansion is the most dangerous encroachment yet, because of how close it comes to the Dahshour monuments, which are on the UNESCO World Heritage site list", Younes said. 'Moreover, Dahshour is largely unexcavated, since the area was a closed military zone until 1996. What remains buried is believed to be a treasure trove shedding light on the largely unknown early dynasties. [...] When you build something over [sic] archaeological site, you change everything. We can't dig in and know what is inside,' Younes told The Associated Press. 'This is the only virgin site in all of Egypt'" (Nasser & AP 2013).*

The situation became so bad that in 2017 the bulldozers entered the actual necropolis itself. Reprials were swift:

*"The Administrative Centre for Antiquities in Cairo and Giza, in collaboration with the Tourism and Antiquities Police, Cairo Governorate, the army forces and General Security, succeeded in removing all recent encroachments made on the archaeological site and its safe zone. The ministry, he continued, will also build a long wall to separate the archaeological site from the neighbouring quarry as well as establishing a small security unit of the Tourism and Antiquities Police in the area adjacent to the quarry in order to prohibit any future encroachment onto the site."*  
Two people were arrested (El-Aref 2017).

Site damage caused by modern development is even more pronounced in areas where only minimal archaeological survey has been conducted. The EAMENA team is surveying the Eastern Deserts of Egypt using satellite imagery, and have located a number of previously unknown settlements, many of which are assumed to be related to the mining activities the area has long been known for. However, imagery indicates that since 2011, the area has seen a resurgence in modern mining, and – as it reoccurs in the same locations where mineral and metal deposits were previously worked – it has decimated documented and undocumented sites alike (Fradley & Sheldrick 2017).

The situation in Egypt bears many of the same hallmarks of a post-conflict area, despite not being in conflict. Egypt is experiencing significant financial difficulties as the fighting in other countries, and recent terrorist attacks within Egypt itself, have decimated the tourism economy on which the country was heavily reliant (Plummer 2016; Trading Economics 2017a; Trading Economics 2017b).<sup>5</sup> Linked to this, there is significant political unrest, which spills over into violence, expressed in – amongst other forms – heritage destruction as an expression of identity. In the cases cited above, this manifests as attacks on Coptic Christians and their heritage as an expression of political/religious views. The Egyptian government has numerous competing and conflicting priorities, making heritage low on the list. In addition, as in many post-conflict countries, the staff lack appropriate training to deal with the situation, another problem noted by Younes (Nasser & AP 2013).

#### The EAMENA Approach

The areas examined in Libya and Egypt are not in conflict, but the complicated security situations enable the circumstances in which heritage destruction can continue to occur. The types of heritage destruction that takes place – and the conditions in which they can happen – are the same as those seen in post-conflict countries, and which should be accounted for in post-conflict planning. The EAMENA project has developed a number of approaches to deal with the threats facing the heritage of the region.

#### Baseline data

In order to protect something, you must know where it is, and this in turn enables the prioritisation of needs. Therefore our first and perhaps most important step is the creation of baseline data: we are using satellite imagery to document, identify and record sites, and assessing the damage and threats to them. These data are input into an open-source ARCHES database (Zerbini 2016) which will be made available online. Basic data will be open-access, with more detailed information made available through a request-based log-on. Building on this collection of information, we are looking at how to assist countries like Syria build a digital, geo-located Sites and Monuments Record (see Azadeh this volume).

#### Watch Lists

Utilising the baseline data, the EAMENA team is developing 'watch lists' of key locations, and here satellite imagery plays a key role. Key sites are selected in advance, pre-empting the post-conflict discussion when time is critical. Through regular monitoring of these sites, basic damage assessments can be conducted, and – if necessary (or possible) – stabilisation efforts can be directed to the sites, and financial resources prepared for





Fig. 2: The image shows looting at El-Hibeh Cemetery site in April 2012 (Photograph courtesy of Dr Redmount, Andy Daily, and the Save El Hibeh Facebook Page).

when the site can definitely be visited and the consideration of restoration is possible. In many cases, it will be critical to stabilise sites as soon as possible, and preparations should be made in advance. For example, the preliminary damage assessments of Aleppo's historic buildings (re-taken by government forces in Autumn 2016) suggest that damage from winter storms could cause extensive further damage to the already fragile damaged buildings (Stoughton 2017; Burns 2017). A satellite imagery based approach also allows preliminary assessments of the scale of the necessary reconstruction efforts to begin, even if sites cannot yet be accessed. Such assessments can then be refined as more information becomes available.

### *Understanding damage and threats*

Discussions of damage can be over-simplified and widely generalised, focussing on certain types of heritage sites, and statements that are only applicable to one type are sometimes indiscriminately applied. Studies are hindered by a lack of comparability of different data sets:

- different data sets cover different geographic areas (but are nonetheless often extrapolated to areas with completely different circumstances);
- the selection methodology for the sites included in data sets is rarely stated, despite its obvious effect on the resulting analysis;
- the data source (and whether it has been verified) is also often unstated.

Whilst post-conflict damage assessment tends to focus on buildings and the ballistic damage they have experienced from fighting, Middle Eastern tell sites, for example, are more likely to be damaged by development, or to be occupied as military locations (which can lead to extensive bulldozing for trenches, gun and tank emplacements, and road construction). Sites on flat land, and below the surface (buried over time), such as Roman lower towns are particularly threatened by agriculture, development and looting, but are largely unaffected by ballistic damage (Casana & Panahi-

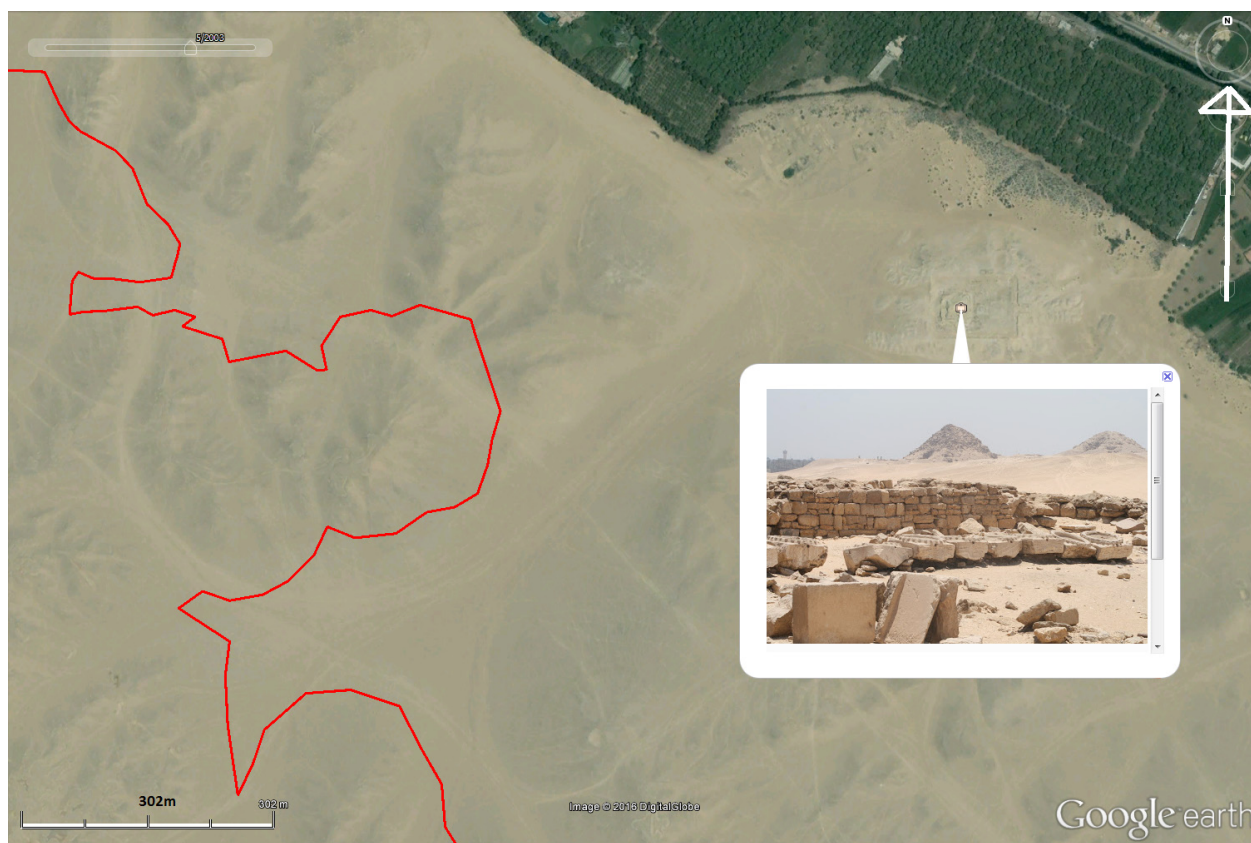


Fig 3a: Mining approaching the Sun Temple of Niuserre (Abu Ghorab), Egypt, that appears to have started in 2003. The Sun Temple is within the World Heritage Site of Memphis – the Pyramid Fields from Giza to Dahshur. Digital Globe image, dated 24 March 2003 on Google Earth. Photograph is part of the Google Earth 'Places' overlay.

pour 2014; Cunliffe 2016). Cemetery sites are most at risk from and are devastated by looting, as at El-Hibeh.

Even reconstruction work can cause damage if the scale and type of problem is not fully understood. In Beirut, for example, the reconstruction process failed to take account of the exceptional amount of archaeology beneath the modern streets, and extensive destruction occurred. The rebuilding plan also failed to take account of the substantial post-excavation work required, and the significant storage that would be needed: the legacies of these problems still face the Lebanese heritage staff today (for a number of references on this subject see Cunliffe 2015). Such lessons are no less applicable today. A media interview with a group tunnelling under Damascus noted that they were digging through the Roman levels of the city (Ketz 2014), and Aleppo – like Damascus and Beirut – contains many thousands of years of archaeological remains under the modern streets. These remains will become accessible, and even visible, when the rubble is cleared, and which will be threatened by the urgent need to rebuild. EAMENA are working to develop a comprehensive comparable understanding of the threats facing sites in conflict, and in peace, and the full spectrum in between.

#### Training

Given the lack of trained staff in many countries, the EAMENA Project has a significant focus on training. So far, we have run two successful training workshops; one for Libyans at Leicester University, and one in Iraq, training heritage professionals, academic staff, and students in remote sensing and site recording methodologies. They were not intended to be detailed enough for comprehensive damage assessments: instead they enabled heritage professionals in these countries to identify and map their heritage, encouraging the creation of comprehensive inventories, and enabling them to assessment of the scale of the site damage. With the money from the successful bid to the newly launched UK Cultural Protection Fund,<sup>6</sup> the EAMENA project will expand its training programme to six MENA countries (both in conflict, and not), using a combination of introductory and advanced courses for heritage professionals in the region.

#### Local collaboration in projects

Crucially, the EAMENA team is also working with local heritage bodies and other NGOs and university projects. Coordination and collaboration are key to prevent overlap and duplication of work in field filled with organisations determined to help. For example, organisations such as the





Fig. 3b: Mining approaching the Sun Temple of Niuserre (Abu Ghorab), Egypt, that appears to have started in 2003. The Sun Temple is within the World Heritage Site of Memphis – the Pyramid Fields from Giza to Dashur. DigitalGlobe image, dated 2 Oct. 2006 on Google Earth. Photograph is part of the Google Earth 'Places' overlay.

ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiative are already comprehensively mapping conflict-related damage to sites in Syria and Iraq, leading EAMENA to focus their damage assessment efforts elsewhere. We recently – in October 2016 – held a successful conference *Protecting the Past: Towards a Better Future with Cultural Heritage* – in Sulaimaniyah in Iraq,<sup>7</sup> to provide the opportunity for international projects operating in Iraq to come together with numerous representatives of the Iraqi State Board for Antiquities and Heritage, and the Kurdish Directorate of Antiquities to discuss the problems facing Iraq's heritage, aiming to avoid duplication, encouraging collaboration, and allowing those engaged in heritage protection efforts in Iraq to gain a deeper knowledge of the problems from those on the ground. Although the offensive to retake Mosul, and the commensurate risks to Mosul's heritage featured heavily, the majority of the discussions focussed on the ongoing threats from development and agriculture, and the need to work to develop comprehensive approaches to protect Iraq's heritage, both during and after the conflict. Nonetheless, many of those present felt it would be important to conduct damage assessments of Mosul at the earliest opportunity, and to begin to restore as much as possible as soon as safely possible to do so, even though they

acknowledged it was unlikely that the conflict would have ended. In order to maximise the utility of the conference, trilingual podcasts and written summaries of the talks were made available on-line for those unable to attend the conference,<sup>8</sup> acknowledging the financial constraints of many of the heritage professionals working in Iraq.

### Observations

Given the extensive destruction that occurs during and after conflict, and in regions that are not in conflict, heritage workers are faced with many challenges and tough decisions. Before we can begin to rebuild cultural heritage we need to know what was – and still is – there; we need to record it; to understand it; and then to prioritise work affected it.

#### Observation 1

Building on already collected baseline data (i.e. knowing what is where), satellite imagery assessment of damage could provide an initial overview to direct damage assessments to the worst affected areas post-conflict. EAMENA's work focusses on using open-source data and software where possible, such as Arches and Google Earth: this minimises some of the costs and information availability issues usually associated with



remote sensing work. Given the scale of heritage destruction in today's conflicts, even such assessments must be prioritised before they can be conducted, and before reconstruction can be considered. Here, we can take an example from the methods employed by disaster recovery teams, who utilise high quality imagery to direct their response teams. Similarly they can also enable preliminary needs assessments to indicate the scale of finance that could be necessary, in order to assist prioritisation of work. Lastly, through use of targeted Watch Lists, preliminary data will already be available for the most important sites.

#### *Observation 2*

Without a comprehensive understanding of the extent and types of damage to sites, policies aiming to tackle damage may fail to take account of local circumstances and the local types of damage. Ballistic damage may be prioritised over many others, regardless of the wider condition of the local heritage. However, in the post-conflict period, a lack of security can also exacerbate looting, uncontrolled development and increasing agriculture, and inhibit access to sites, which can cause continued degradation. Trained staff can identify these threats, and they should be addressed in post-conflict plans. Heritage staff should be trained in site recording methodologies and GIS-based approaches, to assist in identifying, locating, and clearly delineating protected site extents; sufficient security should be provided for sites identified as being at risk; and heritage staff need to have the support of law enforcement and prosecution agencies when confronting those who intend to damage sites. However, given the economic needs of many who loot sites, local education and engagement with heritage is the only long-term solution to improve site protection.

#### *Observation 3*

Given that damage and destruction to cultural property can occur not only during conflict, but after it and outside it, some work to damaged sites should be conducted during conflict, if it is safe to do so. Stabilisation of damaged buildings, for example, (and the provision of the resources to do this), is vital during conflict; after the conflict it may be too late. However, it is important to understand that damage will not stop once the immediate conflict is over. It is therefore vital to plan for the post-conflict period during conflict, and it may even be acceptable to begin reconstruction work once the site is clearly no longer at risk, as long as work conducted is chosen and carried out with sensitivity. Such work can give people a sense of hope, and strength, as witnessed at the second Protecting the Past conference.

#### *Observation 4*

Lastly, it is important to remember that there will be a lack of money, a lack of trained staff, and little infrastructure to support heritage professionals working in those countries affected by conflict. The University in Mosul was recently targeted in airstrikes as Daesh were using it to manufacture chemical weapons, devastating the Chemistry Department, and pictures circulated on the internet of the University Library, gutted by fire after fighting.<sup>9</sup> Daesh had already closed the Archaeology Department, and numerous books in the Mosul Library were burned, echoing an earlier event there in 2003, from which it was unlikely to have fully recovered (Baker et al. 2010; Knuth 2007). The lack of facilities hinders the training of new staff for the future but also hinders current staff, removing opportunities for work inside the country by those who are responsible for their heritage.

The need for rebuilding and reconstruction extends now beyond the buildings themselves. Our approaches must be comprehensive, and collaborative, working to restore not only the buildings, but to build up our colleagues in the affected countries with training, and the necessary infrastructure to effectively manage their heritage. Our rebuilding programmes must not only take account of the local circumstances, but must actively include local participation in the rebuilding, developing local connections to sites to encourage local interest, and enhance site protection. The total loss of previously-recorded artefacts from sites that have been looted, and the destruction of unrecorded archaeological layers that the looting entails means that, although heavily damaged, they cannot be reconstructed. Therefore their protection must also be included in post-conflict planning to prevent further deterioration. Given the extent of the heritage resource in any given country (numbering many thousands of historic buildings and archaeological sites) it will never be possible to protect them all: local community engagement is key and reconstruction provides an opportunity to develop it. In addition, such work will provide much needed alternative legitimate income for possible looters who may be struggling without work in poor economic conditions while the country rebuilds.

As our understanding of heritage value develops, designing reconstruction plans that fit local, national and international priorities becomes increasingly complex. To this complexity, we must add the continuing damage that occurs to sites in the post-conflict period, and the devastation sustained to the wider heritage sector responsible for its management. If we are to succeed in protecting the heritage we need to show its relevance in today's society. By using the term

'heritage' we are referring to more than just buildings, but to a wider cultural heritage that includes archaeological sites, traditions and intangible heritage. In order to achieve this, our plans should be as comprehensive, as inclusive, and as collaborative as possible, drawing on the expertise of multiple groups and based on detailed baseline data. The EAMENA approach to documenting and understanding the cultural heritage of the region makes a significant contribution to this goal.

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> A copy of "Absolute despair with UNESCO: An Open Letter" is available here: [https://www.academia.edu/24344292/Absolute\\_despair\\_with\\_UNESCO\\_An\\_Open\\_Letter](https://www.academia.edu/24344292/Absolute_despair_with_UNESCO_An_Open_Letter) (accessed 10 Jan. 2017).
- <sup>2</sup> <http://eamena.arch.ox.ac.uk/> (accessed 10 Jan. 2017).
- <sup>3</sup> Dr Abdelamir al-Hamdani. 2016. Digitizing the Past: A New Atlas and Database of the Archaeological Sites in Iraq. Presentation at Protecting the Past (II): Towards a Better Future with Cultural Heritage Conference, Sulaimani, Iraq 30–31 October. <http://www.protectingthepast.com/PtP/podcasts-sulaimani/> (accessed 10 Jan. 2017).
- <sup>4</sup> Data has been collected from media sources and extensive imagery analysis, and has not been independently verified.
- <sup>5</sup> At its height, tourism accounted for 12.5 billion USD in revenue. In 2014 (the last available figures) it was only 7.5 billion and tourism arrivals were far lower in 2016 than 2014 Plummer, R. 2016. Can Egypt's tourism recover from latest blow? BBC News, 21/05/2016. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-36340581> (accessed 10 Jan. 2017), Trading Economics 2017b: Egypt Tourist Arrivals 1982–2017; Trading Economics 2017a: Egypt Tourism Revenues 1982–2017.
- <sup>6</sup> <https://www.britishcouncil.org/arts/culture-development/cultural-protection-fund/projects> (accessed 10 Jan. 2017).
- <sup>7</sup> The conference was a collaboration between the American University in Iraq, Sulaimaniyah (AUIS) and the University of Sulaimaniyah.
- <sup>8</sup> [www.Protectingthepast.com](http://www.Protectingthepast.com) (accessed 10 Jan. 2017).
- <sup>9</sup> Picture posted by Al-Monitor, Photo of the Day, (REUTERS/Ahmed Jadallah), 31 Jan. 2017. Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/al-monitor/photos/a.378041322246259.103473.236829849700741/1382861188430929/?type=3&theater> (accessed 31 Jan. 2017).

## Credits

- Fig. 1: Author on base of DigitalGlobe image/ Google Earth.
- Fig. 2: Photograph courtesy of Dr Redmount, Andy Daily, and the Save El Hibeh Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10150767915049354&set=oa.364071873645130&type=3&theater>).
- Fig. 3: Author on base of DigitalGlobe image/ Google Earth.
- Fig. 4: <http://www.judgmentofparis.com/board/showpost.php?p=488&postcount=1>.

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# CATASTROPHE AND CHALLENGE

## CULTURAL HERITAGE IN POST-CONFLICT RECOVERY

**The destructive effects of war**, and particularly the deliberate targeting of cultural sites, constitute an exceptional challenge for Heritage Conservation. The general principles of retaining cultural significance by continuous care and by minimal intervention may seem of little use when one is faced with catastrophic and wide-spread damage to culturally significant places – be they individual monuments, urban structures or archaeological sites. Post-conflict recovery encompasses a wide range of topics, many of which have not yet been studied in depth.

**This publication presents** papers presented during the conference on »Cultural Heritage in Post-Conflict Recovery«. The conference, held in December 2016 was the fourth out of the series »Heritage Conservation and Site Management«, initiated both by BTU Cottbus–Senftenberg and Helwan University Cairo. The conference series is linked to their Joint Master Programme »Heritage Conservation and Site Management«. Addressing the subject of Post-Conflict Recovery, BTU Cottbus–Senftenberg and Helwan University Cairo are taking a first step towards sketching the scope and the depth of the problems of Heritage and War. Speakers from many countries are providing insights into approaches to cope with these problems.

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